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Introduction

1- Definition of Creed:

Creed consists of ‘Aqaa’id (beliefs) which your heart accepts, with which your soul is content, about which you are convinced without any doubt.

2- People’s degrees of ‘Aqeedah (faith):

People fall into many categories regarding the strength or weakness of their beliefs, on the basis of the clarity of the proofs and their hold on their minds.

To explain this point I will cite the following examples:

If someone hears of the existence of a country which he has never seen before, such as Yemen for example, from someone else not known to be a liar, he will accept and believe that such a country does exist. If that person hears the same thing from a number of people, his belief will be strengthened (even though this will not stop him from doubting his belief if he has a reason to do so).

If he sees a photograph of that country his conviction of its existence will be strengthened even further and doubt will be difficult in the face of such strong proof. If he travels and sees signposts to that country his conviction will be strengthened still further and doubts will dissipate.

If he visits that country and sees it with his own eyes then there will be absolutely no room for doubt and his belief will be consolidated so strongly that he will never give it up even if all people unanimously believe otherwise.

If he walks in the roads and streets of that country and studies its affairs and circumstances his experience and knowledge of it will increase and this will make his belief clearer and stronger.

If you understand this, then know that the people with regard to their religious creed are split as well: some were taught those beliefs and accepted them out of custom. Such people are not immune from doubting their beliefs if they have reasons for doing so.

Another category consists of people who have considered their beliefs carefully and have developed strong faith and conviction. Another category consists of people who have thought long and hard and sought the assistance of Allah (SWT), by obeying Him, following His commands and perfecting their worship of Him. This lights the lanterns of guidance in their heart in such a way that they will know by insight matters which perfect their faith and their conviction: "But to those who receive Guidance, He increases the (light of) Guidance, and bestows on them their Piety and Restraint (from evil)." (Surat-Muhammad (47), ayah 17)

I have given you this example to help you rise above blind imitation in relation to religious beliefs, to think deeply about your beliefs and to seek the assistance of your Lord by obeying Him in order to know the fundamentals of your religion so that you can reach the ranks of great men and rise in the grades of perfection.

You have been chosen for a great task indeed; If only you realize how great is! So rise to the challenge; and fulfill your responsibility.

3- Islam’s respect for the intellect and its encouragement of thinking and contemplation.

The basis of Islamic belief, as is the case with the rules of Sharee’ah, is the Book of Allah (SWT), and the Sunnah (practice) of His Prophet (PBUH).

You should know however that all those beliefs are supported by sound reasoning and provable by correct thinking and this is why Allah (SWT) honoured the mind by addressing it directly and made sanity a precondition for responsibility, and called upon the mind to think and contemplate. Allah (SWT) says: ‘Say: ‘Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth; but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not.’’ (Surat-Yunus (10), ayah 101)

And He (SWT) also says: ‘Do they not look at the sky above them? - How We have made it and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it? And the earth- We have spread it out, and set thereon mountains standing firm, and produced therein every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs)- to be observed and commemorated by every devotee turning (to God). And We send down from the sky rain charted with blessing, and We produce therewith gardens and Grain for harvests; And tall (and stately) palm-trees, with shoots of fruit-stalks, piled one over another as sustenance for (God’s)

Servants;- and We give (new) life therewith to land that is dead: Thus will be the Resurrection.' (Surat-Qaaf (50), ayahs 6-11)

He also denounced those who do not think and ponder over matters. He says: 'And how many Signs in the heavens and the earth do they pass by? Yet they turn (their faces) away from them!' (Surat-Yusuf (12), ayah 105)

He called on adversaries to provide evidence, even in relation to matters that are obviously false. The reason for that is to show the importance of evidence and to demonstrate the value of argument. It is reported in a Hadeeth that Bilaal, May Allah be pleased with him, once came to ask the Prophet's permission to call adhaan for the Morning Prayer and found him crying. He asked the Prophet why he was crying. The Prophet answered: 'O Bilaal, how can I not cry when Allah (SWT) revealed to me tonight: 'Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, - there are indeed Signs for men of understanding,' (Surat-aal-Imraan (3), ayah 190)

The Prophet of Allah, May Allah be pleased with him, added 'O woe to anyone who reads this verse and doesn't ponder upon it.' (Narrated by Ibn Abu Dunya in his book Al-Tafakkur [Contemplation])

Thus you can see that Islam does not restrict ideas or imprison the mind, but rather guides it to work within its proper limits. It informs human beings of how little they know and calls on them to increase their knowledge. Allah (SWT) says: 'Of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, (O men!).'(Surat-al-Israa' (17), ayah 85). And He also says: '...but say "O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge."'(Surat-Taha (20), ayah 114)

4- Classification of the articles of Islamic 'Aqaa'id.

The Islamic creed can be divided into four main sections each of which has many sub-sections:

a) Ilaahiyaat (Theology): This section studies matters related to Allah (SWT) such as His attributes, His Names and His actions. This also includes the obligations on the servant of Allah towards his Lord as a result of these beliefs.

b) Nubuaat (Prophethood): This section considers matters related to the Prophets, peace be upon them, such as their attributes, their immunity from sin (ʿisma), their functions and the need for their message. Under this section fall matters which relate to pious people, may Allah be pleased with them, the miracles, acts of divine grace (Karaamah) and divine scriptures.

c) Rawhaniyaat (The Soul): This section considers matters related to the unseen world such as angels, may Allah's peace be on them, the jinn and the soul.

d) Sam'iyaat (Eschatology): This section studies matters related to life in the grave and the Hereafter such as the conditions of the grave, the signs of the Last Day, Resurrection, coming face to face with Allah, the Reckoning and Reward or Punishment.

Ilaahiyaat (Theology)

I) The nature of Allah, (SWT)

Know my brother, may Allah guide me and you to the truth that the nature of Allah (SWT) is too vast to be encompassed by the human mind or to be conceived by human ideas because however high the human mind may soar or however far human understanding may go, it is always limited in power and ability. We shall devote a special chapter, God willing, to help you to know the extent of the inability of the human mind to grasp the reality of things. Here it suffices to remind you of what we surely know at present which is that our minds, weak and strong, make use of many things which they know nothing about. Electricity and magnetism for example are forces which we use and benefit from but we know nothing about their true nature. Not even the greatest scientist can inform you about the nature of these things. Knowledge of the reality and nature of things does not benefit us in any way and it suffices for us to know their qualities in such a way that will benefit us.

If this is the situation regarding the concrete matters, what about the nature of Allah (SWT)? Many people who talked about the nature of Allah, glory be to Him, went astray. Their indulgence in that caused them to be misled and to fight amongst each other because they had dwelled on matters which they cannot determine with their minds. This is why the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, forbade thinking about the nature of Allah (SWT) and commanded us to reflect on the creation of Allah.

Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, said that a group of people used to debate the nature of Allah, glory be to Him, and the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him, said to them: "Ponder over the creation of Allah and do not ponder over the essence of Allah because your minds cannot possibly encompass that."

This command does not mean to curb freedom of thought. It does not mean indifference to the search for truth nor does it restrict the exercise of reason. Rather it is meant to protect the mind from falling into the pits of misguidance and keep it away from handling questions which it is not equipped to study, nor handle, however great its powers may be. This is the approach of the righteous servants of Allah who realize the greatness of His essence and the majesty of His position.

Al-Shibly, may Allah have mercy on his soul was once asked about Allah, (SWT), and he answered: 'He is Allah, the Only One, the Well-known, the Infinite, the Indescribable.' Yahya-ibn-Mu'aadh was also asked about Allah, glory be to Him, and he answered: 'Your Lord is one.' He was then asked 'What is he like?' He said, 'He is the Lord, the All Powerful.' He was further asked, 'Where is He?' He answered: 'He is the Ever Watchful (over His creation)'. Then the questioner further said: 'I haven't asked you about that.' Ibn Muaadh said: 'What I have described to you are the attributes of Allah. Anything else is the attributes of the created.'

Therefore you should confine your efforts to trying to grasp the greatness and majesty of your Lord through pondering over His creation and abiding by what His attributes entail.

ii) The Names of Allah, (SWT)

The Creator, in His wisdom, made Himself known to His creation through names and attributes that suit His Majesty which a believer should memories as a blessing and has pleasure in mentioning them and as a mark of respect for their status. We give here the authentic Hadeeth which puts them all together. What a great teacher the Ahaadeeth of the Prophet are and what an excellent guide the tongue of revelation and the lantern of Prophethood.

Abu Hurairah, May Allah be pleased with him, said: The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Allah has ninety nine Names, one hundred but one. Everyone who memorizes them enters the Jannah, He is One (witr), He loves the witr.'

Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim, and in another narration of Al-Bukhari, he says: '...whosoever counts them....' The same Hadeeth was narrated by Al Tirmidhi but he added: 'He is Allah. There is no god but He, the All Merciful, the All Compassionate, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy, the Peace, the Faithful, the Guardian, the Mighty, the Compeller, the Superb, the Creator, the Maker out of naught, the Fashioner, the Forgiver, the Subduer, the Bestower, the Provider, the Opener, the All-knowing, the Restrainer, the Extender, the Abaser, the Exalter, the Honourer, the Dishonourer, the All-hearing, the All-seeing, the Judge, the Just, the Subtle, the Aware, the Clement, the Magnificent, the Forgiving, the Appreciative, the Sublime, the Great, the Protector, the Sustainer, the Reckoner, the Majestic, the Bountiful, the Watchful, the Hearkener, the All-embracing, the Wise, the Loving, the Glorious, the

Resurrector, the Witness, the Truth, the Trustee, the Strong, the Firm, the Patron, the Praiseworthy, the Accounter, the Originator, the Restorer, the Quickener, the Destroyer, the Alive, the Eternal, the Perceiver, the Illustrious, the One, the Eternal support of the creation, the Able, the Prevailing, the Promoter, the Retarder, the First, the Last, the Manifest, the Hidden, the Governor, the High-exalted, the Righteous, the Relenting, the Avenger, the Pardoner, the Full of Pity, the Owner of sovereignty, the Lord of Majesty and Bounty, the Equitable, the Gatherer, the Self-Sufficient, the Enricher, the Giver, the Withholder, the Distresser, the Profiter, the Light, the Guide, the Incomparable, the Everlasting, the Heir, the Director, the Patient.'

The meaning of some of these holy Names of Allah

Al-Quddus (The Holy) means the One without faults.

As-Salaam (The Peace) means the source of peace for His creatures. It also means the One without faults.

Al-Mu'min (The Faithful) means the One who fulfils His promise to His creatures and who protects them from His punishment.

Al-Muhaymin (The Guardian) means the controller or the guardian

Matters relating to the Beautiful Names of Allah.

1- Names other than the 99 Names.

The above 99 names are not all the names which have been cited for Allah (SWT). Other names were cited in a Hadeeth. A different narration of the above Hadeeth mentioned: Al-Hannaan (The Loving , the Compassionate), Al-Mannaan (the Generous Provider), Al-Badee' (the Beautiful, the Creative), Al-Mugheeth (the Rescuer), Al-Kafeel (the Guardian, the Guarantor), Dhul-Tawl (He who has a long reach), Dhul-Ma'aarij (Lord of the Ways of Ascent), Dhul-Fadl (Lord of Grace), Al-Khallaaq (the Master Creator).

Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi in his commentary on al Tirmidhi ascribes to some scholars that 'In the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions, one thousand names for Allah have

been mentioned.' The author of Al-Qasd Al-Mujarrad wrote something to that effect and it was also mentioned in Al Shawkaany's Tuhfat al Dhaakireen who added: 'The most comprehensive account appears in the said Hadeeth.'

2-Ahaadeeth which contain words which have been metaphorically used as names of Allah:

Know that some Ahaadeeth contained words that were used as names of Allah (SWT) but the context of situation and the etymology would indicate they are not. Such instances were metaphors, similes or ellipses. An example of this is in the Hadeeth narrated by Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with Him, in which the Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be with Him, said: 'Do not curse time (Dahr)because Allah is time.' (Narrated by Muslim)

Another example is the saying of Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her: 'Let him cry because crying (aneen) is one of the Names of Allah which comforts the sick.' (Mentioned by Al Jalaal Suyuuti in his Al-Jami' Al-Sagheer which he ascribed to Al Rafi'i and described it as hasan [good, i.e. regarding the reliability of transmission chain]) It was not narrated by Muslim or by Abu Hurairah as it is mistakenly believed by some people.

Another example is using the name Ramadan to refer to Allah in some traditions.

All these phrases are not to be taken literally. What is meant in the first example is that Allah is the Cause of Events of time and therefore nothing should be attributed to time itself. Nor should it be cursed. In the second example, crying (aneen) happens as a result of the power of Allah and it comforts the sick and so on and so forth regarding the meaning which can be derived from the context of the situation.

3-The inadmissibility of changing or inventing Names or Attributes for Allah.

Know that the majority of Muslims agree that it is inadmissible to ascribe to Allah (SWT) a name or an attribute that is not mentioned in the Sharee'ah with the intention of using it as a name for Allah even if it were giving the impression of perfection of Allah. It is not right, for example, to describe Allah as the engineer of the great universe nor to say the Director General of the affairs of human beings. That would be unacceptable in cases where they would be understood as names or

attributes conventionally ascribed to Allah and generally agreed to be used with reference to Him. However, if such phrases are used in a certain context to explain the actions of Allah and make it easier for people to understand, then there will be no harm in doing so. However, it is be better to refrain from using such phrases out of reverence for Allah (SWT).

4- The objective and descriptive nature of the names of Allah.

The above mentioned names include one that is used exclusively for the Divine Essence, namely the glorified name 'Allah'. All the rest are clearly epithets and could therefore be used to describe and qualify the name Allah. With regard to the question as to whether the word Allah is derived or not, this is a matter of dispute, but it does not entail anything of practical consequence and it suffices for us to know that the proper name of the deity is that singular noun whereas the rest of the names have got some epithetical quality to them.

5- Characteristics of the beautiful names of Allah.

Some people say that each of the names of Allah has certain characteristics and mysteries associated with it. Some are detailed and some are brief. Other people go even further beyond this assertion to say that each name has a spiritual servant who would serve everyone who keeps mentioning it and so on. All I know in this regard (and for everyone who has got some knowledge, there is someone who is more knowledgeable than my) is that the names of Allah are sublime words that are superior to the rest of seech and there is a blessing inthem and a great reward in mentioning them and if a human being keeps uttering them, this will purify his soul, especially if this is done with a sincere heart and clear understanding. Anything beyond that has not been mentioned in the Qur'an or the Hadeeth, and we have been forbidden from going to extremes in the religion of Allah or adding to it and we should confine ourselves to what has been mentioned therein.

6- The greatest name of Allah

The greatest name of Allah has been mentioned in several Ahaadeeth which include the following

(1) Barida, May Allah be pleased with him, said that the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, heard a man supplicating and saying 'Oh Allah, I beseech You and testify that You are Allah. There is no god but You, the Only, the Everlasting who begets not and who is not begotten and there is none like unto Him'. Barida said that the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'By Him in whose hands my soul rests, he has addressed Allah with His greatest name by which if He is called on, He responds; and if He is asked, He grants.'(Narrated by Abu Dawud, Al Tirmidhi, Al Nisaa'i and Ibn Majah.)

Al Munthiri said: 'Our Sheikh Abul Hasan al Maqdisi said: Its chain of transmission is not disputed and I know not of any Hadeeth in this chapter with a more reliable chain of transmission.' Al-Hafiz Ibn-Hajar said that this Hadeeth '...had the strongest isnad (chain of transmission) amongst the Ahaadeeth in this chapter.'

(2) Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said the Prophet, (PBUH), once entered the mosque and found a man had just finished his prayers and was supplicating and saying 'Oh Allah, there is no god but Allah. Thou art the Mannaan (the Generous Provider), the Badee' (Designer) of the heavens and the earth. Thou art full of Majesty and Grace.' The Prophet, (PBUH), then said: 'Do you know how he supplicated to Allah. He supplicated to Allah with His greatest name by which if He is called, He answers; and if He is asked, He grants.' (Narrated by Abu-Dawud, Al-Tirmidhi, Al-Nisaa'i and Ibn-Majah.)

(3) Asmaa' Bint Yazid, may Allah be pleased with her, related that the Prophet, (PBUH, said the greatest name of Allah is in these two verses: 'And your God is One God. There is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful' and the opening verse of Aal-Imraan

'Alif Lam Mim. Allah. There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal.'

(Narrated by Ahmed, Abu-Dawud, al-Tirmidhi and ibn-Majah. Al-Tirmidhi said it is a good (hasan) and sound (sahih) Hadeeth)

(4) Sa'd-ibn-Malik said: 'I heard the Prophet of Allah, (PBUH) say:

'Shall I tell you about the greatest name of Allah, by which if He is called upon He answers and if He is asked He grants. It is the supplication used by Jonah when he called in the three darknesses:

'There is no god but Thee. Glory be to Thee. I was one of the transgressors.'

A man said, 'O Prophet of Allah: Was that supplication unique to Jonah or can it be used by all believers?'

The Prophet, (PBUH) answered: 'Haven't you heard the saying of Allah, exalted be He: 'We delivered him from distress and thus do we deliver those who have faith.' (Narrated by Al Hakeem)

You can see from these Ahaadeeth and others that they did not specify the greatest name of Allah. Scholars have differed in identifying it because of their differences in authenticating the Ahaadeeth to the extent that they had forty opinions about this subject. What we can conclude from these noble Ahaadeeth and from the sayings of reliable Muslims is that the greatest name of Allah is a compound supplication (du'aa') made up of a number of His glorious names which if a man uses in his supplication, provided the conditions for proper supplication are observed, Allah answers the supplication. This has been explicitly stated in the noble Ahaadeeth in various places.

Having established this, then the assertion of some people is that the greatest Name of Allah is a secret which is given to only a few individuals with which they open closed doors and go beyond what is customarily possible and which endows them with qualities which no other people enjoy, is against what has been said by Allah and His Prophet. If those people claim support for their position in the noble verse: 'Said one who had knowledge of the Book: 'I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of an eye.''

Claiming that the meaning of 'had knowledge of the Book' is the greatest name of Allah, we would refute them by saying that the commentators on the Qur'an said that the supplication which was referred-to was either: 'Oh who art Living, Self-subsisting, Eternal'. Or 'Allah, there is no deity but He - the Living, The Self-subsisting, the Eternal.' Some people even claimed that the greatest name of Allah is Syriac pronounced (ahya shrahya). This is an unsubstantiated claim. The fact of the matter is that the greatest name of Allah is to be found only in the authentic Ahaadeeth.

In short, some people have become fascinated with mysteries, claim to have special knowledge, and add to the traditions. They claimed things which are not mentioned in the Qur'an nor in the Hadeeth, something which we have been absolutely forbidden from doing. So let us confine ourselves to what has been authentically transmitted to us.

The Attributes of ALLAH, Glory Be To Him

1-The attributes of Allah (SWT), for those who have a sound mind.

If you reflect on this universe and its wonderful wisdoms, its strange creatures, its intricate design, its greatness and vastness, its complex composition, its creativity, renewal and inventiveness; if you look at the clear sky with all the stars and their constellations and consider the suns and the moons and their orbits; if you think of this earth with its plants, its produce, its minerals, its treasures, its elements and materials; if you look at the animal world and how it is wonderfully guided and inspired; indeed if you look at how man himself is made up, at his many systems, each of which performs a marvellous function; if you look at the world of the oceans and the wonders it contains; if you know the forces of the universe and their mysteries and laws such as electricity, magnetism, the ether, radium; then if you move from considering the nature and qualities of these worlds to the links and interrelationships amongst them and how each is related to the other very closely in such a way that they all constitute one global unit each part of which serves the other parts in the same way as an organ in a single body serves the other organs; if you do all that, you will, without needing evidence, arguments, revelation nor Qur'an, come out with a simple theoretical conclusion, namely: This universe has a

Creator, Maker, Originator and this Maker must be great beyond what the feeble human mind can conceive.

The ability of this Creator is above the human understanding of ability. He is Living in every sense of the word. He does not need any of His creatures because He existed before they existed. He is omniscient. He is above the laws of the universe because it is He who created those laws. He existed before the creatures because it is He who created them. He will exist after them because it is He who will bring their existence to an end. In short, you will find yourself fully convinced that the Creator and Designer of this universe has all the qualities of perfection beyond what the small human mind can conceive of. He is above the qualities of imperfection. This conviction will come from your own reflection and your own sincere feelings:

'The nature made by Allah in which He has made men. There is no altering of Allah's creation. That is the right religion but most people do not know.' (Surat-ar-Rum (30), Ayah 30)

After this introduction, I would like to mention some remarkable observations in this universe and you will see that, although few in comparison to the vastness of this universe, and the perfection of its design, will, inshaa' Allah, be sufficient to create in your heart such feeling as I have mentioned.

First observation

This air which we inhale is composed of a number of elements, two components of which are important: One component is suitable for man's breathing which chemists conventionally call oxygen. The other component is a harmful one which they call carbon dioxide. Among the qualities of the great interrelationships amongst the units of this miraculous universe is that the component which is harmful to man is inhaled by plants and it is useful for them: while man inhales oxygen and exhales carbon dioxide the plants do the reverse process. Consider this co-operative relationship between man and plants with regard to that which is the most important element of life for both of them, namely breathing. Now, could something like this be done in the great universe by other than an Omnipotent, Omniscient and all-Wise Being?

Second Observation

Let us think of the food we eat. It is composed of a number of vegetable and animal ingredients divided by scientists into proteins, carbohydrates or fats, for example. The saliva digests some carbohydrates and dissolves some glycogen and other substances which are dissolvable, whereas the stomach's enzymes digest the proteins such as meat and the bile produced by the liver digests fats and breaks them up into very small parts which can be absorbed. Thereafter, the pancreas produces four enzymes, each of which undertakes to complete the digestion of one of the three elements, the carbohydrates, the proteins or the fats and the fourth enzyme which converts milk into cheese. Reflect on this marvellous interrelationship amongst the parts of the human body and amongst the plant, animal and food ingredients which man consumes.

Third observation

Look at a flower in a plant and you will see that it has got beautiful, attractive petals with bright colours, and if you ask botanists about the wisdom in that, they will tell you that this is to tempt bees and similar creatures to suck the nectar of flowers, to come to the flower so that when they stand on its petals, they will pick up pollen on their feet and carry it from the male flower to the female flower, thus bringing about fertilization. Consider how these beautiful petals in the flower are made as a link in the chain between plants and animals so that plants can use animals in the process of fertilization which is necessary for the process of bearing fruit and reproduction.

Everything in the universe shows you that there is behind it great Wisdom and sublime Will and great Control and that the universe is run by extremely precise Laws. The Lord of this Wisdom and the Possessor of this Greatness and the Maker of these Laws is Allah.

The Qur'an speaks in detail about this subject, and draws our attention to these wonders and great mysteries. You can hardly find a Surah (chapter) which does not mention the signs and bounties of Allah and the manifestations of His Power and Wisdom and which does not urge people to always reflect on them.

'Among His signs is that he created you from dust and then, behold, ye are men scattered (far and wide). And among His Signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are Signs for those who know. And among His Signs is the sleep that ye take by night and by day and the quest that ye (make for livelihood) out of His Bounty: verily in that are signs for those who hearken. And among His Signs, He shows you the lightning, by way both of fear and of hope, and He sends down rain from the sky and with it gives life to the earth after it is dead: verily in that are Signs for those who are wise.' (Surat-ar-Rum (30), ayahs 21-24)

Allah (SWT) also says: 'Among His Signs is this, that He sends the Winds, as heralds of Glad Tidings, giving you a taste of His (Grace and) Mercy,- that the ships may sail (majestically) by His Command and that ye may seek of His Bounty: in order that ye may be grateful. We did indeed send, before thee, Prophets to their (respective) peoples, and they came to them with Clear Signs: then, to those who transgressed, We meted out Retribution: and it was due from Us to aid those who believed. It is God Who sends the Winds, and they raise the Clouds: then does He spread them in the sky as He wills, and break them into fragments, until thou seest rain-drops issue from the midst thereof: then when He has made them reach such of his servants as He wills behold, they do rejoice! - Even though, before they received (the rain) - just before this - they were dumb with despair! Then contemplate (O man!) the memorials of God's Mercy! - How He gives life to the earth after its death: verily the same will give life to the men who are dead: for He has power over all things. (Surat-ar-Rum (30), ayahs 46-50)

There many other instances in the Holy Qur'an such as in Surat-ar-Ra'd (13), al-Qasas (28), al-Anbiyaa' (21), an-Naml (27), Qaaf (50), and other chapters.

2- Attributes of Allah in the Holy Qur'an

A summary of the attributes of Allah as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an.

The verses of the Holy Qur'an have mentioned some attributes necessary for perfect divinity.

Here are some of those holy verses.

1) The existence of Allah

Allah (SWT) says: 'It is He Who has created for you (the faculties of) hearing, sight, feeling and understanding: little thanks it is ye give! And He has multiplied you through the earth, and to Him shall ye be gathered back. It is He Who gives life and death, and to Him (is due) the alternation of Night and Day: will ye not then understand?' (Surat-al-Mu'minun (23) ayahs 78-80)

And He also says: 'God is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that ye can see; is firmly established on the throne (of authority); He has subjected the sun and the moon (to his Law)! Each one runs (its course) for a term appointed. He doth regulate all affairs, explaining the signs in detail that ye may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord. And it is He who spread out the earth, and set thereon mountains standing firm and (flowing) rivers: and fruit of every kind He made in pairs, two and two: He draweth the night as a veil o'er the Day. Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who consider! And in the earth are tracts (diverse though) neighboring, and gardens of vines and fields sown with corn, and palm trees - growing out of single roots or otherwise: watered with the same water, yet some of them We make more excellent than others to eat. Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who understand!' (Surat-ar-Ra'd (13), ayahs 2-4)

All those verses inform you about the existence of Allah (SWT), and you can find evidence for that through His regulation of the affairs of this wonderful universe.

2&3) The Eternity and Permanence of Allah

Allah, exalted be He says:

'He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things.' Surat-al-Hadeed (57), ayah 3)

And He also says: 'And call not, besides God, on another god. There is no god but He. Everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face. To Him belongs the Command, and to Him will ye (all) be brought back.' (Surat-al-Qasas (28), ayah 88)

And He also says: 'But will abide (for ever) the Face of thy Lord, - full of Majesty, Bounty and Honour.' (Surat-ar-Rahmaan (55) ayah 27)

These holy verses contain a reference to the attributes of eternity and permanence of Allah (SWT).

4) Allah is not an originated being

Allah, glorified be He says: 'Say: 'He is God, the One and Only God, the Eternal, Absolute. He begetteth not, nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him.'' (Surat-al-Ikhlaas (112), ayahs 1-4)

He also says: '(He is) the Creator of the heavens and the earth: He has made for you pairs from among yourselves, and pairs among cattle: by this means does He multiply you: there is nothing whatever likes unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees (all things).' (Surat-ash-Shuraa (42), ayah 11)

This contains a clear reference that Allah is beyond occurrence and that He is above being a child or a father or having an equal or a similar.

5) Allah's Self-Sufficiency

Allah, glorified be He says: 'O mankind! It is ye that have need of God: but God is the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise.' (Surat-Faatir (35), ayah 15)

He also says 'I called them not to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor (even) their own creation: nor is it for helpers such as Me to take as lead (men) astray!' (Surat-al-Kahf (18), ayah 51)

This contains a reference to the fact that He (SWT) is self-sufficient and does not need His creatures but it is they who need Him.

6) The Oneness of Allah, exalted be He.

Allah says: 'God has said: 'Take not (for worship) two gods: for He is just One God: then fear Me (and Me alone).' To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and on earth, and to Him is duty due always: then will ye fear other than God? And ye have

no good thing but is from God: and moreover, when ye are touched by distress, unto Him ye cry with groans.' (Surat-an-Nahl (16), ayahs 51-53)

And He also says: 'They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One God. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them. Why turn they not to God, and seek His forgiveness? For God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.' (Surat-al-Maa'idah (5), ayahs 74-75)

Allah also says: 'Or have they taken (for worship) gods from the earth who can raise (the dead)? If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides God, there would have been confusion in both! But glory to God, the Lord of the Throne: (High is He) above what they attribute to Him! He cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned (for theirs) or have they taken for worship (other) gods besides him? Say, 'Bring your convincing proof: this is the Message of those with me and the Message of those before me.' But most of them know not the Truth, and so turn away. Not a Prophet did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me.' (Surat-al-Anbiyaa' (21), ayahs 21-25)

He also says: 'Say: 'To whom belong the earth and all beings therein? (Say) if ye know!' They will say, 'To God!' say: 'Yet will ye not receive admonition?' Say: 'Who is the Lord of the seven heavens, and the Lord of the Throne (of Glory) Supreme?' They will say, '(They belong) to God.' Say: 'Will ye not then be filled with awe?' Say: 'Who is it in whose hands is the governance of all things, - who protects (all), but is not protected (of any)? (Say) if ye know.' They will say, '(It belongs) to God.' Say: 'Then how are ye deluded?' We have sent them the Truth: but they indeed practice falsehood! No son did God beget, nor is there any god along with Him: (if there were many gods), behold, each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have lorded it over others! Glory to God! (He is free) from the (sort of) things they attribute to Him! He knows what is hidden and what is open: too high is He for the partners they attribute to Him!' (Surat-al-Mu'minun (23), ayahs 84-92)

He also says: Say: 'Praise be to God, and Peace on his servants whom He has chosen (for his Message).' (Who) is better? - God or the false gods they associate (with

Him)? Or, who has created the heavens and the earth, and who sends you down rain from the sky? Yea, with it We cause to grow well-planted orchards full of beauty of delight: it is not in your power to cause the growth of the trees in them. (Can there be another) god besides God? Nay, they are a people who swerve from justice. Or, Who has made the earth firm to live in; made rivers in its midst; set thereon mountains immovable; and made a separating bar between the two bodies of flowing water? (Can there be another) god besides God? Nay, most of them know not. Or, who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him, and Who relieves its suffering, and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth? (Can there be another) god besides God? Little it is that ye heed! Or, who guides you through the depths of darkness on land and sea, and who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy? (Can there be another) god besides God? - High is God above what they associate with Him! Or, who originates creation, then repeats it, and who gives you sustenance from heaven and earth? (Can there be another) god besides God? Say, "Bring forth your argument, if ye are telling the truth!' (Surat-an-Naml (27), ayahs 59-64)

There are other similar verses which indicate that He (SWT) is One in His being, One in His attributes, One in His actions and deeds. There is no Lord but Him and no deity but Him.

7) The Power of Allah, exalted be He

Allah (SWT): 'O mankind! if ye have a doubt about the Resurrection, (consider) that We created you out of dust, then out of sperm, then out of a leech-like clot, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We may manifest (our power) to you; and We cause whom We will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term, then do We bring you out as babes, then (foster you) that ye may reach your age of full strength; and some of you are called to die, and some are sent back to the feeblest old age, so that they know nothing after having known (much), and (further), thou seest the earth barren and lifeless, but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells, and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs). This is so, because God is the Reality: it is He Who gives life to the dead, and it is He Who has power over all things. And verily the Hour will come: there can be no doubt about it, or about (the fact) that God will raise up all who are in the graves.' (Surat-al-Hajj (22), ayahs 5-7)

He also says: 'I called them not to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor (even) their own creation: nor is it for helpers such as Me to take as lead (men) astray!' (Surat-al-Kahf (18), ayah 51)

He also says: 'We created the heavens and the earth and all between them in Six Days, nor did any sense of weariness touch Us.'(Surat-Qaaf (50), ayah 38)

He also says: 'It is He Who has let free the two bodies of flowing water: One palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter; yet has He made a barrier between them, a partition that is forbidden to be passed. It is He Who has created man from water: then has He established relationships of lineage and marriage: for thy Lord has power (over all things). (Surat-al-Furqaan (25), ayahs 53-54)

He also says: 'Seest thou not that God makes the clouds move gently, and then joins them together, then makes them into a heap? - Then wilt thou see rain issue forth from their midst. And He sends down from the sky mountain masses (of clouds) wherein is hail: He strikes therewith whom He pleases and He turns it away from whom He pleases, the vivid flash of His lightning well-nigh blinds the sight. It is God Who alternates the Night and the Day: verily in these things is an instructive example for those who have vision! And God has created every animal from water: of them there are some that creep on their bellies; some that walk on two legs; and some that walk on four. God creates what He wills for verily God has power over all things.' (Surat-an-Nur (24), ayahs 43-54)

There are other similar verses which point to the vastness of His power and wonderful magnitude of His greatness.

8) The Will of Allah

Allah (SWT) says: 'Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, "be", and it is!' (Surat-Yaaseen (36), ayah 82).

He also says: 'When We decide to destroy a population, We (first) send a definite order to those among them who are given the good things of this life and yet transgress; so that the word is proved true against them: then (it is) We destroy them utterly.' (Surat-al-Israa' (17), ayah 16)

Allah (SWT) also says narrating the story of Al-Khidr's conversation with Moses, peace be upon them: 'So thy Lord desired that they should attain their age of full strength and get out their treasure - a mercy (and favour) from thy Lord. I did it not of my own accord. Such is the interpretation of (those things) over which thou wast unable to hold patience.' (Surat-al-Kahf (18), ayah 82)

He (SWT) also says: 'God doth wish to make clear to you and to show you the ordinances of those before you; and (He doth wish to) turn to you (In Mercy): And God is All-knowing, All-wise. God doth wish to Turn to you, but the wish of those who follow their lusts is that ye should turn away (from Him),- far, far away. God doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): For man was created Weak (in flesh).' (Surat-al-Nisaa' (4), ayahs 27-28)

There are other similar holy verses which confirm the existence of the will of Allah (SWT) and that it supersedes every other: 'But ye will not, except as God wills.' (Surat-al-Insaan (76), ayah 30)

9) The Omniscience of Allah:

Allah (SWT) says: 'He knows all that goes into the earth, and all that comes out thereof; all that comes down from the sky and all that ascends thereto and He is the Most Merciful, the Oft-Forgiving.' (Surat-Saba' (34), ayah 2)

He also says: 'He knows what is in the heavens and on earth; and He knows what ye conceal and what ye reveal: yea, God knows well the (secrets) of (all) hearts.' (Surat-at-Taghabun (64), ayah 4)

Allah (SWT) also says in the course of narrating the advice given by Luqmaan to his son: ''O my son!' (said Luqman), 'If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, God will bring it forth: for God understands the finest mysteries, (and) is well-acquainted (with them).'' (Surat-Luqmaan (31), ayah 16)

Allah (SWT) also says in the course of narrating what happened between Shu'aib and his people: 'The leaders, the arrogant party among his people, said: 'O Shu'aib! we shall certainly drive thee out of our city - (thee) and those who believe with thee; or else ye (thou and they) shall have to return to our ways and religion.' He said: What!

even though we do detest (them)?' 'We should indeed invent a lie against God, if we returned to your ways after God hath rescued us therefrom; nor could we by any manner of means return thereto unless it be as in the will and plan of God, Our Lord. Our Lord can reach out to the utmost recesses of things by His knowledge. In the God is our trust. our Lord! decide Thou between us and our people in truth, for Thou art the best to decide.'' (Surat-al-A'raaf (7), ayahs 88-89)

He also says: 'Seest thou not that God doth know (all) that is in the heavens and on earth? There is not a secret consultation between three, but He makes the fourth among them, - Nor between five but He makes the sixth,- nor between fewer nor more, but He is in their midst, wherever they be: In the end will He tell them the truth of their conduct, on the Day of Judgement. For God has full knowledge of all things.' (Surat-al-Mujaadalah (58), ayah 7)

Allah (SWT) also says: 'In whatever business thou mayest be, and whatever portion thou mayest be reciting from the Qur'an,- and whatever deed ye (mankind) may be doing,- We are witnesses thereof when ye are deeply engrossed therein. Nor is hidden from thy Lord (so much as) the weight of an atom on the earth or in heaven. And not the least and not the greatest of these things but are recorded in a clear record.' (Surat-Yunus (10), ayah 61)

There are other similar verses which indicate the vastness of the knowledge of Allah (SWT), and His awareness of everything small or large, minute or great.

10) Allah, the Living

Allah, most High says: 'God! There is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth.' (Surat-al-Baqarah (2), ayah 255)

He also says: 'Alif Laam Meem. God! There is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal. It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) before this, as a guide to mankind, and He sent down the criterion (of judgement between right and wrong).' (Surat-aal-Imraan (3), ayahs 1-3)

He also says: 'It is God Who has made for you the earth as a resting place, and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape- and made your shapes beautiful,- and has provided for you Sustenance, of things pure and good;- such is God your Lord. So Glory to God, the Lord of the Worlds! He is the Living (One): There is no god but He: Call upon Him, giving Him sincere devotion. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds!' (Surat-Ghaafir (40), ayahs 64-65)

And so many other verses which indicate that Allah (SWT), is characterised with perfect, unparalleled life.

11&12) The hearing and the sight of Allah (SWT)

Allah, exalted be he says: 'God has indeed heard (and accepted) the statement of the woman who pleads with thee concerning her husband and carries her complaint (in prayer) to God: and God (always) hears the arguments between both sides among you: for God hears and sees (all things).' (Surat-al-Mujaadalah (58), ayah 1)

He also says: 'Seest thou one who forbids- A votary when he (turns) to pray? Seest thou if he is on (the road of) Guidance?- Or enjoins Righteousness? Seest thou if he denies (Truth) and turns away? Knoweth he not that God doth see?' (Surat-al-'Alaq (96), ayahs 9-14)

Allah (SWT) said to Moses and to Aaron when He sent them to Pharaoh: 'Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds;But speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (God).'They (Moses and Aaron) said:'Our Lord! We fear lest he hasten with insolence against us, or lest he transgress all bounds.' He said:'Fear not: for I am with you: I hear and see (everything).' (Surat-Taha (20), ayahs 43-46)

He also says: 'And God will judge with (justice and) Truth: but those whom (men) invoke besides Him, will not (be in a position) to judge at all. Verily it is God (alone) Who hears and sees (all things).' (Surat-Ghaafir (40), ayah 20)

There are other verses which indicate that He (SWT) has the attribute of hearing and sight.

13) The Speech of Allah, exalted be He.

Allah, the exalted, says: '...and to Moses God spoke direct;-' (Surat-an-Nisaa' (4), ayah 164)

He also says: 'Can ye (o ye men of Faith) entertain the hope that they will believe in you?- Seeing that a party of them heard the Word of God, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it.' (Surat-al-Baqarah (2) ayah 75)

There are other verses which indicate that He (SWT) has the attribute of speech.

14) Infiniteness of Allah's attributes:

The attributes of Allah (SWT) mentioned in the Holy Qur'an are numerous, and the aspects of His perfection are infinite and cannot be conceived by the minds of human beings. Glory be to Him. We cannot praise Him as adequately as He has praised Himself.

A comparison between the attributes of Allah and the attributes of human beings:

What a believer should understand by the attributes of Allah (SWT) differs entirely from the use of the same word 'attribute' with reference to human beings.

One says, for example, 'Allah is 'aalim (all-Knowing) and ilm (Knowledge) is an attribute of Allah (SWT) and one also says that a certain person is very knowledgeable and a certain person has the attribute of knowledge. However, is the meaning of 'knowledgeable' the same in both situations? God forbid, that this be the case. Indeed the Knowledge of Allah (SWT), is infinite and perfect, whereas the knowledge of created beings is absolutely nothing compared to the Knowledge of Allah. The same applies to the attribute of 'living', the attribute of 'hearing', the attribute of 'sight', the attribute of 'speech', and the attribute of 'Power' and 'Will' etc.. All these terms have entirely different meanings in relation to Allah from those in relation to human beings in terms of degree and quality, because Allah (SWT) is unlike any of His creatures. So pay attention to this crucial point. However, you are not required to know the nature of this difference, but it suffices for you to know its consequences in the universe and what it means to yourself. And I beseech Allah to protect me from error and to help me to succeed in my endeavour.

Rational and logical proofs of the attributes of Allah, exalted be He.

Theologians like to prove the attributes of Allah (SWT), using rational arguments and logical analogies. We see no harm in that approach because the mind is the repository of knowledge, and because sanity is a precondition for responsibility. This approach may help to remove any trace of confusion or falsehood from the mind of those who are confused or misguided. However, the existence of Allah and affirming His attributes of absolute Perfection have become self evident and hardly need any proof or argument. Only someone who is arrogant or with a diseased heart, would demand evidence for those self-evident truths. He may not even be satisfied with rational evidence. In spite of that, I am going to mention some general and specific rational proofs for the sake of completeness relating to what has been mentioned.

First proof: Our universe, which is so vast and intricate, points to the existence of its Creator, His greatness and Perfection.

Second proof: You cannot give what you do not have. If the Creator of this universe were not characterised by Perfection, how then can His creatures have in them the traces of those attributes of perfection.

Third proof: This has to do with the fact that the Creator is One and cannot possibly be more than one. This is because multiplicity of creators would be a cause of discord and chaos and one of them will have to be an overlord to the others since an essential quality of being God is to be majestic and great. Furthermore, if one of the Creators acted on his own, this would cancel out the divine attributes of the others, and if they joined together in action, this would do away with some of the attributes of each of them; and the annulment of the attributes of divinity contravenes its Majesty and Greatness. Thus there has to be One God and no other Lord.

These are examples of logical proofs of the existence of the Creator and His attributes. Whoever wants more proofs can refer to longer works. However, this matter is firmly established in the innate nature (fitra) of pure souls and sound hearts. 'for any to whom God giveth not light, there is no light!' (Surat-an-Nur (24), ayah 40)

A question which puzzles many people

It was narrated in a Hadeeth by Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be with him, said: 'Some people will keep asking questions until they ask: 'Allah created the creation but who created Allah?' Whoever is asked this question, let him (simply) say 'I believe in Allah'.' (Narrated by Muslim)

(Imam Mazrewy commented on this Hadeeth and said that the Prophet, seems to be enjoining Muslims to refrain from trying to respond to such questions about Allah. However, Imam Mazrewy explained, such questions are of two types: those which are not troubling the mind and did not arise because of some misconception. Those can simply be ignored. It seems that the above mentioned Hadeeth is referring to this type of questions which are referred to as waswasah (whisperings of Satan). Since they are not persistently occurring to the mind, they can be set aside without consideration of evidence, because there is no benefit in dwelling on them. As to the persistent questions which arise as a result of some misconception, they can be tackled only with arguments and evidence. Wallahu a'lam (And Allah knows best))

This question is wrong in the first place because we have been commanded by the Prophet, may the peace and blessing of Allah be with Him, not to ponder over the essence of Allah (SWT), because our weak minds are incapable of conceiving the true nature even of themselves. So how can they possibly understand the true nature of Allah (SWT). However, this question comes to the minds of some people and I would like to explain the answer to them through an example which, God willing, will satisfy their questions.

I would say the following:

If you place a book on your desk and then go out of the room and come back a short while later and find that the book which you had left on the desk had been removed and placed in the drawer, you would in this situation, be firmly convinced that someone must have put it in the drawer, this is because you know very well that among the attributes of this book is that it cannot move by itself. Remember this point and let us now move to the next point.

If there is someone sitting on a chair in your office, and you go out and come back and find him sitting on the carpet, for example, you would not ask about the reason for his movement, and you would not believe that someone moved him from his earlier position, because you know that among the attributes of this person is that he can move by himself and that he does not need anyone to move him. Now bear this second point in mind and listen to what I am going to say next.

Human beings came into existence at a certain point in time, and we know that they do not come into existence by themselves, but they must have a Creator. From that we conclude that their Creator is Allah (SWT). Now since perfect divinity presupposes that the deity does not need any other but is necessarily self-sufficient, we conclude that Allah (SWT) exists by Himself and does not need anyone to create Him.

If you place the first two points next to what I have just said, the answer will become clear to you. This is as far as the human mind can go. I ask Allah to protect us from error for He is indeed Kind and Merciful.

Now I would like to quote to you some statements of some European scholars which support the existence of Allah (SWT) and acknowledge His perfect attributes, and Allah alone I trust to help me succeed in my endeavour.

Statements by physicists which support the existence of Allah and acknowledge His attributes.

We have stated earlier that this belief is innate in sound hearts and firmly established in pure minds. It is almost a self-evident fact supported by the outcome of the exercise of the mind, generation after generation. This is why European cosmologists and others have believed in it even though they didn't learn about it from a religion. I shall move on to quote some of their testimonies, not by way of proving the truth of our faith, but in order to help strengthen it within souls and to silence those who would like to relinquish faith and who are deceiving themselves..

1) Descartes, the French philosopher, said 'Even though I feel imperfection in myself, I feel at the same time there must be a Perfect Being and I find myself obliged to believe that this feeling was implanted in me by the Perfect Being which is characterised by all attributes of perfection, which is God.'

In this statement he is acknowledging his weakness and inadequacy and confirming his belief in the existence and perfection of Allah. He is acknowledging that his feelings and sensations are a gift from Allah and are part of the innate nature instilled in him by Allah: 'the innate nature made by Allah in which He has made men' (Surat-ar-Rum (30), ayah 30)

2) Isaac Newton, the well-known English physicist, who discovered the law of gravity said: 'Don't doubt the Creator, because it is inconceivable that accidents alone could be the controller of this universe.'

3) Herschel, the English astronomer, said: 'The more knowledge we have, the more irrefutable proofs we obtain for the existence of an Eternal Creator with infinite power. Geologists, mathematicians, astronomers and biologists have co-operated in setting up the edifice of science which is the edifice of God's greatness.'

4) Lenet was quoted by Camille Flamirion, the Frenchman, in his book titled 'God in Nature' as having said: 'The wonders of God's creation, the Everlasting, the Eternal, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, have astounded me: what power, what wisdom, what creativity in His creatures, small or large. The benefits which we get from these creatures testify to the greatness of the Mercy of God who made them subservient to

us. Their perfection and harmony points to His vast Wisdom. Their preservation from extinction and their renewal bear witness to His Majesty and Greatness.'

5) Herbert Spencer, the English philosopher, said in this respect in his Essay on Education: 'Doubtless, to the superstitions that pass under the name of religion, science is antagonistic; but not to the essential religion which superstitions merely hide. Doubtless, too, in much of the science that is prevalent, there is a pervading spirit of irreligion; but not in that true science which has passed beyond the superficial into the rofound.

Devotion to science is a tacit worship - a tacit recognition of worth in the things studied; by implication in their Cause. It is not a mere lip-homage, but a homage expressed in actions - not a mere professed respect, but a respect proved by the sacrifice, thought, and labour.

Not by dogmatic assertion, does it teach the impossibility of comprehending the Ultimate Cause of things; but it leads us clearly to recognise this impossibility by bringing us in every direction to the boundaries we cannot cross. It realises to us in a way which nothing else can, the insignificance of human intelligence in the face of that which transcends human intelligence.'

He then goes on to give examples to explain what he meant:

'A scientist who sees a drop of water and knows that it is made up of oxygen and hydrogen in certain proportions, in such a way that if these proportions change, we would have something other than water, believes in the Greatness, the Power, the vast Wisdom and Knowledge of the Creator more strongly and firmly than a non-biologist who sees it only as a drop of water. Similarly, a scientist who looks at a hailstone under a microscope and sees the beauty of its design and the magnificence of its composition, no doubt feels the Beauty of the Creator and the His vast Wisdom more strongly than does someone who knows nothing about it more than that it is frozen rain.'

The statements of cosmologists in this regard are innumerable ,and what we have mentioned should suffice. We have cited those statements so that our young people realise that their religion is from Allah (SWT) and that science can only strengthen and support their faith.

Allah, the Exalted, says in the Holy Qur'an: 'Soon will We show them our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth), and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things?' (Surat-Fussilat (41), ayah 53)

The position of the first generations and latter generations regarding the verses and Ahaadeeth containing attributes of Allah.

The salaf (early generations of Muslims), may Allah be pleased with them, said: 'We believe in these verses and Ahaadeeth as they are, and we leave aside explanation of their meanings to Allah (SWT). Thus, they affirm their belief that the words Allah's hand, eye, eyes, settling Himself firmly on the Throne, laughter, wondering...etc, cannot be explained in terms that we can understand, and therefore their explanation should be left only to Allah (SWT), who knows their true meaning. This is especially so in view of the prohibition by the Prophet, peace be upon him: 'Ponder over the creation of Allah and do not speculate on the Essence of Allah, because you will never be able to give Him His due.'

Al-Iraqi said this Hadeeth was narrated by Abu Na'iim in Al-Hilya with 'weak' transmission. It was also narrated be Al-Asbahani in Al-Targheeb wal-Tarheeb with a more reliable transmission. It was also related by Abu-Sheikh. However all of them, may Allah be pleased with them, have categorically stated that there is no similarity between Allah and His creatures. Here is what they said.

a) Abul Qasim Allalekaiey narrated in 'Usool al-Sunnah' that Mohammad ibn al-Hasan, the friend of Abu Hanifa, may Allah be pleased with them both, said: 'All jurists from the east to the west have agreed on the belief in what is contained in the Qur'an and the authentic Hadeeth regarding the attributes of Allah (SWT), without interpretation, description or comparison. Whoever in these times tries to interpret any of that would be going against the practice of the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and the consensus of the Muslims, because they did not describe nor interpret, but only quoted what is in the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Traditions of the Prophet) and no more.'

b) Imam Ahmed's position regarding the verses and Hadeeth pertaining to the attributes of Allah.

Al Khallal said in his book Al-Sunnah that Ahmed ibn Hanbal, (as was stated in Ibn Hanbal's own books such as 'Al Sunnah Muhammadiyya wa al Mihna') said: 'I asked Abu Abdullah about the Ahaadeeth which state that 'Allah (SWT), comes down to the lower heavens', and 'Allah sees', and 'Allah places His foot' and such similar Ahaadeeth. Abu Abdullah answered: 'We believe in them as true without enquiring how (these actions are done), nor what they mean nor do we reject any of them. We know that, whatever the Prophet, peace be upon him, brought was true provided it is attributed to him through reliable transmission. We do not reject what Allah says; and Allah (SWT), cannot be described with anything better than what He said about Himself. Nothing is like unto Him.'

c) Imam Malik's position regarding the verses and Hadeeth pertaining to the attributes of Allah.

Harmala ibn Yahya said: 'I heard Abdullah ibn Wahb say: I heard Malik ibn Anas say:

'Whoever talks about the nature of Allah and for example when explaining the verse which says 'The Jews say that Allah's hands are shackled' , points with his hands to his neck, or when explaining the verse 'He hears everything and sees everything' points to his eyes or part of his hand, may it be cut off because (he was so blasphemous that) he likened Allah to himself.'

Malik dded 'Have you not heard the statement of Al Bara': when he said that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not make a sacrifice of four (sheep) and Al Bara' made a gesture with his hand in the way that the Prophet did, and added 'and my hand is 'shorter' than the hand of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him'. Thus, Al Bara' was reluctant even to describe the hand of the Prophet, peace be upon him, out of reverence for him who is only a human being. How then about the Creator whom nothing is like unto Him?'

d) Abu Bakr Al Athram, Abu Amru Al Talmanki and Abu Abdullah ibn Batta et al in their books said that Abdul Aziz ibn Abdullah ibn Abu Salama Al-Maji narrated a long story which he concluded with the following: 'What attributes Allah used for Himself and conveyed to us through His Prophet are what we use to

refer to Him and we do not make up any other attribute for Him. Neither do we ignore what He said to describe Himself, nor do we invent new attributes for Him.'

Know, may Allah have mercy on you, that in order to protect yourself from committing errors in matters of religion, you should abide by what has been delimited to you and not go beyond it. Among the principles of the faith is to accept what is right and to reject what is wrong. You should have no hesitation in mentioning the attributes of Allah which are commonly known and which are easy for hearts to accept, what is mentioned in the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet and what is known to succeeding generations of the Muslim Ummah. Do not put yourself into unnecessary trouble.

Therefore you should not exert your mind to discover, nor your tongue to mention, what your heart does not accept, what you cannot find in the Book of Allah, nor in the Traditions of the Prophet as attributes of your Lord, and refrain from mentioning such things as did the Lord refrain from mentioning concerning Himself, because taking the trouble in trying to know what He hasn't used to describe Himself is just like rejection of the attributes He mentioned about Himself. In the same way as you should decry the denial of the attributes which God used for himself, you should also decry the far-fetched attempts to attribute to Allah qualities which He hasn't mentioned about Himself.

By Allah, success came to the Muslims who knew what is right (and their knowledge is the standard by which to weigh right) and rejected what is wrong. Those Muslims heard how Allah used to describe Himself in His book and what was reported to them from their Prophet and their hearts never ceased mentioning those attributes of Allah, and they never invented any attribute for Him. The attributes which the Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was reported to have used to describe his Lord are equal to what the Lord used to call Himself.. Those who are truly knowledgeable do not go beyond where their knowledge has taken them and they describe their Lord only with what He described Himself and they reject what He has kept silent about. They do not deny or reject any attribute that He used for Himself nor do they resort to describing Him with attributes which He hasn't used for himself in order to appear to be knowledgeable. There are certain things which Allah decided to mention and there are other things which He, in His wisdom, decided not to mention.

'If anyone contends with the Prophet even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that becoming to men of Faith, We shall leave him in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell,- what an evil refuge!' (Surat-al-Nisaa' (4), ayah 115)

May Allah grant us and yourselves wisdom and join us in the company of the righteous.

The position of the latter generations regarding the verses and Ahaadeeth containing attributes of Allah.

I have already made clear to you that the first generations, may Allah be pleased with them, believed in the verses and Ahaadeeth mentioning the attributes of Allah as they came down to them and left the explanation of their meanings to Allah (SWT), while believing that He (SWT), is too sublime to be similar to any of His creatures.

The latter generations, on the other hand, have said: 'We categorically state that the meanings of the words of these verses and Ahaadeeth should not to be taken literally but they should be understood as metaphors, the interpretation of which can do no harm.' In this way, they tended to interpret 'a face' as 'essence/self', 'the hand' as 'ability' etc. in order to avoid the suspicion of comparing Allah to His creatures. Here are some of their statements in this respect.

1) Abul Faraj ibn al-Jawzi, the Hanbalite, stated in his Daf' shubhat al-Tashbih: (Refuting the misconception of comparing Allah to His creatures) that Allah (SWT) said: 'But will abide (for ever) the Face of thy Lord,- full of Majesty, Bounty and Honour.' (Surat-ar-Rahmaan (55), ayah 27)

The commentators explained that it is Allah Himself who will abide forever).

Commentators also said with regard to the verse: 'Send not away those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His face.' (Surat-al-An'aam (6), ayah 52) that 'face' in this verse refers to Allah, Himself.

Al Dahhaq and Abu Ubaida said with reference to: 'Everything (that exists) will perish except His own Face.' (Surat-al-Qasas (28), ayah 88) that the 'face' here also means Allah Himself.

Ibn al Jawzi included a chapter at the beginning of the above-mentioned book in which he responded to those who said that taking these verses and Ahaadeeth literally was the position of the first generations. The summary of what he said is that taking these verses and Ahaadeeth literally amounts to anthropomorphism and to comparing Allah to His creatures, because the literal meaning of a word is what it was coined for, thus the only meaning of the word 'hand' is the actual hand and so on. However, the position of the first generations was not to interpret these words literally, but to refrain altogether from enquiring into them.

Ibn al-Jawzi also maintained that the terms aayaat sifaat' and ahaadeeth sifaat (attribute verses and attribute Ahaadeeth) are an innovation because they do not occur in the Qur'an nor the Sunnah (Traditions of the Prophet), and calling them such is inaccurate because they are merely epithets. He supported his argument with several pieces of proof for which there is no space to mention here.

2) Fakhr ud-Deen ar-Raazi stated in his 'Asaas ul Taqdiis' : 'Know that the text of the Qur'an should not be understood literally for a number of reasons.

a) The literal meaning of Allah's statement in the Holy Qur'an:

'...in order that thou mayest be reared under Mine eye.' (Surat-Taha (20), ayah 39) (reared on my eye ['ala 'ayni]) and taken that way, the verse would be saying that Musa, peace be upon him, is 'resting on that eye', 'stuck to it', and this is something no one with any sense can maintain.'

b) Allah's saying: 'construct an Ark under Our eyes' (literally: by Our eyes [bi a'yunina]) (if taken literally) means that the instrument for constructing ships is that eye. (The Arabic structure 'bi a'yunina' is an elliptical structure which means 'under our supervision').

c) Ascribing eyes (more than two) to one face is reprehensible. Therefore there is necessarily a need for metaphorical interpretation which is that this phrase should be taken to mean 'extreme care and supervision'.

3) In the first chapter of his book 'The Revival of Religious Sciences', Imam al Ghazali said in the course of discussing metaphorical expressions and their interpretation : 'The third type is of objects which, if they are referred to explicitly, would be easily understood without any difficulty, but they are in fact used metaphorically or semiotically in order to create a strong effect on the mind of the listener such as the saying of the Prophet, peace be upon him: 'The mosque contracts from phlegm like skin contracts from fire'. The meaning is that, in view of the spirit of the mosque and its great status, spitting in it amounts to contempt of the mosque and contradicts its sanctity in the same way as fire affects the skin. Needless to say that the space of the mosque does not literally contract from spitting.

The same thing applies to the saying of the Prophet, peace be upon him: 'Doesn't he who lifts his head before the Imam fear that Allah turns his head into the head of an ass'.

With respect to figure and shape, this has never happened and cannot happen. But taken as a metaphor, it is possible because what is meant is not the head of an ass in its actual shape and form but its quality which is stupidity. Thus, whoever lifts his head before the Imam, his head is like the head of an ass in terms of stupidity. This metaphorical meaning is what is intended, not the literal one.

The meaning of an expression can be taken to be metaphorical either on rational grounds or on the basis of evidence from the Sharee'ah. The rational reason is that the literal meaning would be implausible, as, for example, in the case of the Prophet's saying: 'The heart of a believer is between two fingers of the All-Merciful.' Of course if we look inside the body of the believers, we will not find any fingers. Therefore, you should understand this as a metaphor for power which is 'the secret of fingers and its hidden soul'. Fingers are used metaphorically to refer to power because this has a stronger effect in explaining the meaning of absolute power.'

Imam al-Ghazali returned to this point in another part of the book, but what we have already mentioned should suffice.

Thus you have seen clearly the approaches of the first generations and the latter generations of scholars. These two approaches gave rise to serious controversy between leading Muslim theologians, and each party supported their position with

arguments and proofs. In fact, if you consider the matter carefully, you will realise that the difference between the two approaches would have been insignificant if each of them refrained from adopting an extremist position. Consideration of this question, however lengthy it may be, will only lead to a single conclusion which is: the matter should simply be left in the hands of Allah, exalted be He. Now let us try to explain this point in detail, with the help of Allah.

The difference between the first generations and the latter generations regarding the attributes of Allah.

Now you know that the position of the first generations with regard to the verses and Ahaadeeth pertaining to the attributes of Allah (SWT), is that they take them for what they are, and refrain from interpreting them or giving them a metaphorical meaning while the latter generations gave them metaphorical meanings which rule out anthropomorphism and avoid any suspicion of comparing Allah to His creatures. You also know that the dispute between the two parties was so strong that they resorted to extremist biased accusations.

Their positions can be summed up as follows.

1) Both parties agreed on the doctrine of tanzeeh (the "elimination [of blemishes of anthropomorphic traits]"; and hence mukhalafah (the "assertion of [Allah's] incomparability, and of the essential difference of His qualities and similarly named qualities of human beings").

2) Each party categorically stated that what these words denote when they are used with reference to Allah (SWT), are not the literal meanings which are used in reference to human beings. This follows from their agreement on the incomparability of Allah.

3) Each of the two parties realised that words are coined to express feelings in the heart or to refer to material things relevant to users of each language, and that no language, however rich it may be, can include expressions about objects unknown to its speakers. Since the facts regarding the essence of Allah (SWT), fall outside human knowledge, then language cannot possibly express them. Therefore trying to define the meanings of these words (denoting attributes of Allah) is a waste of time.

It has thus been demonstrated that the Salaf (first generations) and the Khalaf (latter generations) did agree on the principle of metaphorical explanation and the difference between them was confined to the fact that the latter generations were more definitive in explaining the intended meaning. They were forced to do so in order to stress the deanthropomorphism of Allah. Their aim was to protect ordinary Muslims from such a misconception. Thus the difference between the two parties does not warrant arguments or recrimination.

We believe that the position of the Salaf (first generations), which was to refrain from enquiring into the meanings of Allah's attributes and leave the explanation of their meanings to Allah (SWT), is safer and should be followed in order to avoid problems resulting from metaphorical interpretation on the one hand, and the nullification of Allah's attributes on the other. If you are one of those whom Allah has endowed with the tranquillity of faith and whose hearts have been blessed with the serenity of certitude, you need not seek other positions.

On the other hand, we believe that the metaphorical interpretations of the Khalaf (latter generations) do not sanction any judgement on them as having gone outside Islam or to have strayed from the right path, nor do they justify that long dispute between them and others past and present, because Islam is vast and comprehensive enough to accommodate all of them. Even the most hard-line adherents of the position of the first generations, may Allah be pleased with them, were forced to resort to metaphorical interpretation in numerous instances. Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal, for example, may Allah be pleased with him, gave a metaphorical explanation for the Hadeeth of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in which he said: 'The Black Stone (in the Ka'ba) is the right hand of Allah on earth' and the Prophet's saying: 'The heart of a believer is between the two fingers of the All erciful' and the Prophet's saying: 'I feel the breath of the All Merciful coming from the direction of Yemen.'

I have come across a statement by Imam Al Nawawi, may Allah be pleased with him, which narrowed down the difference between the two positions to such a degree that there should be no room left for dispute or argument, especially since the latter generations qualified their metaphorical explanations with the condition that those explanations have to be acceptable rationally, and to be in line with the Sharee'ah and do not go against any of the fundamentals of Islam.

Ar-Raazi in his 'Asas ul Taqdis' says: 'If we sanction metaphorical interpretation, we do not go into too much detail, and in the instances where we do not sanction metaphorical interpretation we leave the explanations to Allah (SWT). This is the general binding rule with regard to all the ambiguous statements (mutashabihaat) (in the Qur'an and in the Hadeeth), and success comes only from Allah.'

The conclusion is that the first generations and the latter generations did agree on the fact that what is meant by those 'mutashabihaat' is not their literal meaning as commonly understood among people. This in effect amounts to ta'weel (metaphorical interpretation) generally speaking. They also agreed that any metaphorical interpretation which goes against the fundamentals of Sharee'ah is inadmissible. In this way, the dispute was limited to interpreting words in accordance with what is acceptable in the Sharee'ah, and this is not a significant matter as you can see. Metaphorical interpretation was an approach which was resorted to by some from the first generation Muslims themselves. The most important aim which all the efforts of Muslims should be directed to at present should instead be to unify our ranks and speak with one voice at every possible opportunity.

On Allah we depend and in Him we trust.

Belief in the Angels (Mala'ika: plural of Malak)

Definition:

Angels are creation that Allah described them as mediators between him and creation. They are created from light and are invisible in their true form. They neither eat, drink, sleep, marry, and not attributed to a particular sex.

Evidence(s):

Sura 2:177,285// 4:136, etc.. and in Hadith: Hadith Jibreel

Characteristics and qualities of the Angels mentioned in the Quran:

1. Created before humans

2. Absolutely submissive and obedient to Allah: Attahrim:6, Sura Al-Anbiyaa':26-28

3. Can take different forms:

a- story of Maryam (Peace be upon her)

b- the guests of Ibraheem (Peace be upon him)

4. Where are they located? In the heavens.

5. They are in different in creation, ranking and have different roles.

a. Creation: Sura Fatir:1

b. Ranking: Sura Assaffat: 166

c. Roles/Responsibilities: Many mentioned in the Quran, shall we remember them together..

i. Descending with revelation (Jibreel). Mentioned in Sura Ashu'ra': 193-194, and many other verses

ii. Angel of death: Sura Assajda:12

iii. Angel of the horn. In the Sunna, his name is specified as "Israfeel"

iv. Angels protecting humans from harm, also called 'Hafatha'. Mentioned in Sura Arra'd: 13

v. Angels that…keep record of our actions: Qaaf(50):18

vi. Angel named Mikaal mentioned in the Quran without specifying a function. There is a hadith that specifices his role being the angel responsible of rain.

vii. Angels that carry the majestic throne of Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala: Sura Al-Haqqa: 17

viii. Angels that receive residents of Al-janna.

viiii. Angels responsible for punishing residers of the Hellfire.

6. Additional actions: Strenghthening the fighters in battlefields

a. Prayer, asking forgiveness for the believers:

Ghafir:7-9, Ahzab: 43

b. Witness Prayer of Fajr: Issra' :77

c. Bring glad tidings to believers during life and after death.

d. Bash Kuffar: Anfal:50-51 and blame disobedients: Nisa':97

e. Execute universal commands (winds, rain, etc...)

7. Additional details from the Sunna:

Number of angels, places that are attended/avoided, times of descending, prayers they make at what circumstances, who do they love/hate, etc..

Implication of the Belief in the Angels (Mala'ika)

Some of the feelings that a muslim may feel as a result of pondering the role of the angels in his/her life could be the following:

1. Increased sense of the majesty and mercy of Allah Subhanahu WaTa'ala
2. Passion towards the angels for the supplication that they perform for us

3. Feeling that the obedient believers in Allah consititue a majority in the universe which grants a sense of pride of being amongst them.

4. Lesser capacity to commit sins knowing the intimate company of angels around us.

Belief in the Jinn

Defintion: they're one of the two kinds of creation that Allah shall reckon. Like angels, they are not visible, in their true form, by humans.

Evidence: Sura Athariyat:56, Sura Arrahman, Surat Al-Jinn, Al-Ahqaf: 31-33, etc..
Characteristics mentioned in the Quran.

1. Created from: Marij min Narr (pure flame of fire), Nari Assamoum
2. Created before humans.
3. They can view us, while we can not view them.
4. Brought into account
5. They have heard the divine messages
6. Were at one point subdued to the service of the Prophet of Allah Sulayman.
7. Used to overhear the news of the heavens before they were prevented.
8. They are descendants of Ibless, and the Kuffar amongst them are called Shayateen (devils).

Belief in the Divine Books

Definition: Firm belief that all preceding revelations to previous messengers via Jibreel are from Allah subhanah wa Ta'ala to be conveyed to the people. They all agree in calling to the true faith of Allah Azza Wa jall, but differ in jurisdictions (5:48). We also believe that the Quran is the dominant revelation that ought to be followed by entire humanity, and many of the revelations sent before the Quran has either been distorted or lost.

Evidence: 2:136, 4:136, Hadith Jibreel

Purpose of sending the books: Al-Baqara: 213.. to be a criterion and a reference of guidance to people and resolve of dispute.

The divine books mentioned explicitly in the Quran to believe in are 4 as follows:
1- The Scribes of Ibrahim: mentioned in Surat Annajm: 36-45, Al-A'la: 14-19

2- The Torah: A Hebrew word for Shari'a. Revealed to Prophet Mousa (Peace Be Upon Him) mentioned in 5:44.

3- The 'Injeel': revealed to Prophet Eisa (Peace Be Upon Him), what are known as the gospels nowadays are not to be called 'injeel' but biographies and writings

including some of Prophet Eisa's sayings, and admonitions in which there's no clear-cut historical evidence for. Mentioned in 5:46

4- The 'Zabour': revealed Prophet Dawood (Peace Be Upon Him). Mentioned in Issra':55, Anbiya':105.

Some verses or the content of the previous books have been mentioned in the Quran attributed to them.

Q: How to deal with narrations of people of the book, sometimes referred to as 'Isra'eliyyat' ?

A: They are divided into 3 categories:

1- Narrations that the Quran testified to its trtthfulness and validity.

2- Narratiosn the are clearly contradictory to the Quran are deemed distorted.

3- Narrations neither accepted/rejected by the Quran are not to be believed nor rejected.

Evidence of distortions in the previous books:

· Loss of original copies, and existence of translations only.

· Current books include human writing.

· Inexistence of a strong chain of historical transmission.

· Different copies are different in content, and sometimes contradictory.

· Erroneous beliefs about the creator and the messengers.

The distortion (Tahreef) are of two types:

1- Semantic, or word wise.

2- Meanings of verses.